

Measure Up

Winter 2008-09

Assessment news for eighth-grade teachers



Findings From NAEP 2007

- Reading scores for eighth-grade students were higher in 2007 than in 1992.
- At grade 8, reading scores for White, Black, and Hispanic students were higher in 2007 than in 1992.
- In 2007, writing scores for eighth-graders improved in about half of the participating states.
- In 25 states, mathematics scores for eighth-graders improved since 2005.

Sample NAEP Item: Reading

As NAEP results are released, select questions from each of the assessments are released as well. These questions can be accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls>. This website also provides teachers with answer keys, scoring guides, sample student responses, and national and state performance results for eighth-grade students. Many teachers have found this to

be a useful tool in measuring their students' achievements and comparing them to students across the nation.

In the 2007 assessment, eighth-graders were asked to read the short article "Kid Fights Cheater Meters and Wins!" and to answer the question below.

Question: According to the article, what did Ellie learn from doing her meter project?

- A) Every fourth meter ran too quickly.
- B) Nine out of ten digital meters were accurate.
- C) 3,600 parking meters were inaccurate.
- D) Almost none of the 50 meters ran too slowly.

In 2007, 52 percent of eighth-graders in public schools answered this question correctly, selecting choice A. An incorrect answer was selected by 48 percent of the students.

The NAEP reading framework guides the reading assessment. The framework is developed by the National Assessment Governing Board and is available at www.nagb.org. In 2007, NAEP assessed three contexts for reading: reading for literary experience, reading for information, and reading to perform a task. In addition

to reading within different contexts, NAEP reading comprehension questions are developed to engage the different approaches that readers may take in the process of trying to understand what is being read.

The context for this question was Reading for Information, where readers gain information to understand the world by reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, textbooks, essays, and speeches. This question was classified under the Developing Interpretation aspect of reading.



In 40 states,
more than 50% of
students correctly
answered the reading
item on page one.

Sample NAEP Item: Reading *(continued)*

To develop an interpretation, the reader must extend initial impressions to develop a more complete understanding of what was read. This process involves linking information across parts of a text as well as focusing on specific information. Assessing this aspect of reading includes questions that require readers to draw inferences about the relationship of two pieces of information and provide evidence to determine the reason for an action. Questions that assess this aspect of reading include the following:

- ★ What event marked a change in the plot or situation?
- ★ What caused the character to _____?
- ★ What caused this event?
- ★ What is the meaning of _____?
- ★ What type of person is this character? Explain.
- ★ What does this idea imply?
- ★ In what ways are these ideas important to the topic or theme?
- ★ What will be the result of this step in the directions?
- ★ What does this character think about _____?

Using NAEP in the Classroom: Writing

In the 2007 assessment, eighth-grade students were given the writing prompt in the box below.

This is an informative writing exercise, and focuses primarily on the subject-matter element in communication. According to the NAEP Writing Framework, informative writing is used to share knowledge and to convey messages, instructions, and ideas. Like all writing, informative writing may be filtered through the writer's impressions, understanding, and feelings. Used as a means of exploration, informative writing helps both the writer and the reader to learn new ideas and to reexamine old

conclusions. Informative writing may also involve reporting on events or experiences, or analyzing concepts and relationships, including developing hypotheses and generalizations. Any of these types of informative writing can be based on the writer's personal knowledge and experience or on information newly presented to the writer that must be understood in order to complete a task. Usually, informative writing involves a mix of the familiar and the new, and both are clarified in the process of writing. Depending on the task, writing based on either personal experience or factual information may span the range of thinking skills from recall to analysis to evaluation.

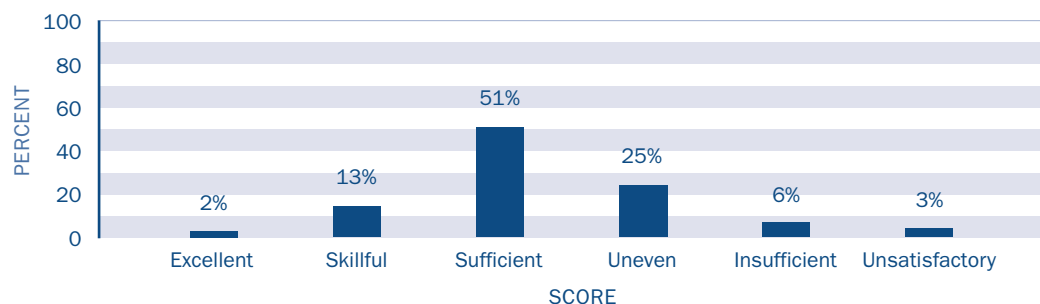
Sample Grade 8 Writing Question

Prompt: Open the envelope labeled E that you have been given. Take out the letter from Rina and read it. Rina, who wrote the letter, is coming to a school in America for the first time and needs to know what a backpack is. Write a letter back to Rina. In your letter, include a clear description of a backpack and explain in detail what she should keep in it. Remember, the more information Rina has, the better prepared she'll be to start eighth grade.

To access the NAEP
frameworks, please
visit www.nagb.org and
select "publications."

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The graph below shows how eighth-grade students in public schools performed on this writing task. About two-thirds of students wrote an essay that was scored sufficient or higher.



Note: These results are for public school students. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.



Scoring Guide Excerpts

Excellent

- Develops and shapes information with well-chosen details across the response.
- Is well organized with strong transitions.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

Skillful

- Develops and shapes information with details in parts of the response.
- Is clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

Sufficient

- Develops information with some details.
- Organized with ideas that are generally related, but has few or no transitions.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried.

Uneven

- Presents some clear information, but is list-like, undeveloped, or repetitive OR offers no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is unevenly organized; the response may be disjointed.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

Insufficient

- Presents fragmented information OR may be very repetitive OR may be very undeveloped.
- Is very disorganized; thoughts are tenuously connected OR the response is too brief to detect organization.

Unsatisfactory

- Attempts to respond to prompt, but provides little or no coherent information; may only paraphrase the prompt.
- Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement.

Please visit
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls> to see sample student responses and performance data for your state.

What is the Nation's Report Card™ ?

The Nation's Report Card™ informs the public about the academic achievement of elementary and secondary students in the United States. Report cards communicate the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a continuing and nationally representative measure of achievement in various subjects over time.

For over three decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. By collecting and reporting information on student performance at the national, state and local levels, NAEP is an integral part of our nation's evaluation of the condition and progress of education. Only information related to academic achievement and relevant variables is collected. The privacy of individual students and their families is protected, and the identities of participating schools are not released.

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Access specific results for a grade level, subject, jurisdiction, and/or student groups	The NAEP Data Explorer at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata
Find information regarding the types of questions used on NAEP assessments or view subject-specific questions	The NAEP Questions Tool at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls
Download a Sample Questions Booklet that contains sample test questions for the upcoming and previous assessments	The National Center for Education Statistics at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/booklets.asp
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